



Start of History of the books.

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History of the books, 2003

History of the Books

In July '39 when all my siblings had left Germany my parents (Mama & Papa) and I finally received the Visas to emigrate to England on condition that we would re-emigrate once our American Quota number came up. The American Government had, and I believe still has, a very strict quota system whereby only a specific number of immigrants are allowed in from each country. This was never relaxed even in the darkest days just before the outbreak of the war. Britain on the other hand opened their doors as long as you had a guarantor (in our case it was Francis Matthissen (cousin)) and could prove that you were on the waiting list and had a quota number for the US. Therefore we thought that our stay in England would only be temporary and that we would eventually end up in the States. We therefore packed two containers with all furniture, linen and also books. The smaller one to go to England, or better Welwyn Garden City and the other larger one eventually to go to America where Elizabeth and also Hal had gone. In Hal's case he went via Ecuador where Kurt also emigrated at a later date. Ursula and Walter were already in England where they had gone earlier in the year. So that just left my parents and myself. Both containers were packed at the same time and as both Papa and Mama were very busy, I at the age of just 15, was left more or less in charge to tell the packers what went into which container. Things did not always go right as when we unpacked outside our very small rented house in Welwyn Garden City the first item which tumbled out was Papa's silk Top Hat in its beautiful leather hat shaped carrying case. Obviously that was the most important item any one should have when we were only allowed 10 Marks to bring with us to England. The other container was sealed by the customs and was despatched to Bremen which had a Free Port. Apparently there were 60 to 80 containers stored there when the war started in September '39. Some of the containers were destroyed in the blitz but most survived the war. We did not know anything of this and we were paid compensation after the war for the loss of our belongings. Now after 60 years the story of the 'Books' can be told.

Trip to Hanover and Bremen 17th November 1999

After telephoning Peter (Schulze) we arranged to meet at his office so that I could see the exhibition of the books etc. He had an amazing amount of work assembling not only the books but facts leading up to the finding of the books and also what happened to the families before and after the Nazi era. I have actually handled the books belonging to our family (Gottschalk/Molling) but I was asked by Peter if I could leave them with him a little longer until the end of the exhibition. Obviously I had no choice but it might even be a little longer as other cities have enquired if they in turn stage one like that with the same material but with their own family books as well. I will keep you informed. There are five sets of books. Two of them have four volumes each and the other three are single books. They are:-

Die Neue Welt, Ein Amerika Buch dated 1799 and the name **Frau Adolf Molling** (Grossmutter)

Machsor, Prayer Books (4 Volumes) dated 1887) and the name on back cover of the leather bound volumes is **Henny Molling** (Grossmutter). The name is tooled in the leather work and gilded but I will mention more about that later.

Hebbels Werke (4 volumes) dated 1899 and the name inside is **Terese Molling** (Mama). She obviously had this book before she married in 1910.

Aus der Untersecunda (Fifth form at school) inns **Innere Abessinien** (Deepest Abessinia) dated 1929 the name inside **Rudolf Gottschalk, Hanover, Richard Wagnerstr.23.** (Rubber stamp)

Lieber Vater. Briefe berühmter Deutscher und ihre Vaeter (Letters of famous German to their father) dated 1932 and the name inside **Adolf Gottschalk, Hanover, Ruchmkorfstrasse 6.** I have no recollection of this book but think it might have been given to me when I attended a Sedar Evening at the Goldmans (Glaziers) House. I had to read one of the prayers as being the youngest male there and I do recollect that they gave me a book. All I remember of that evening is that I sat next to Komerzianrat Berliner, I believe he was the inventor of the Gramophone and started Deutsche Gramophone Company.

The rest of the exhibition is very interesting too. It shows what happened to the containers after they were stored in the Free Port of Bremen. Apparently there were 60 - 80 individual containers but some families had more than one and it is known that the Hinrichsen family had about 10 of them there. In 1942 the Nazis issued a new decree whereby goods owned by person who are now not residents of Germany had to be sold by public auction and the proceeds to go and help the war effort. We obviously lived abroad but that was also true of all of the other Jews who were either killed or still living in Concentration Camps. All of the camps except the very early ones like Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen were outside Germany mainly in the Eastern countries like Poland, Latvia etc. So one can justify everything. Being stored in a Free Port meant that the goods were actually not in Germany but as far as the law was concerned duty had been paid and it had left German soil. It is similar as when goods are kept in Bond and they can only brought into a country after the duty is paid. Now to bring the containers back into Germany duty was charged by the authorities. This was shown as a debit balance and it appears as a credit balance in the same ledger. Peter then showed me a copy of advertisement from a local Bremen Newspaper from 1942 advertising the sale of the goods **Furniture, Beds, Carpets, Ivories, Oil Paintings and also Books.** A few of the books were sold to private individuals but the bulk was purchased by the University Library of Bremen. There is no mention in the advertisement that these goods were formerly owned by Jewish people but the Library obviously knew about their origin. All the books not only have the auctioneers reference number but also the initials **J A** pencilled inside each book the **J A** stands for **Juden Auction.** Some books have also a remark inside (I can not remember the term they used) that the books could not be lent out but could only be read on the premises of the library. There were also some books which had **Gift** written in pencil which is the German for **Poison.** These books could only be shown to researcher who had to have a pass from a high ranking Nazi and could only be read in front of one of the directors in the library. Peter showed me the very large ledger of the auctioneer with all the items listed written in beautiful handwriting. The numbers in the ledger correspond with the numbers in the books. It also shows the hammer price realised etc.

The exhibition illustrates with pictures the rise of the Nazis and also pictures of the Synagogue burning on the 10th November 1939. It also shows a picture of one of the containers which certainly brought back my memory the day we packed our two containers. Peter then picked out a few families, illustrating with photos the background and also what happened to them after they left Germany. The Gottschalk/Molling family was one of them. He used the photos, you Tom sent him. By the way Tom, Peter promised to return the originals photos to you soon. He also hopes to send me copies of all the written material used in the exhibition.

I also learnt something new. You will all remember the ritual burning of books by Jewish and communist authors in the very early days of Nazism. This apparently was a pure propaganda stunt. None of the libraries gave up their books and no one was ever prosecuted as far as it is known for owning these books. It was just to whip up anti Semitic and anti communist feelings in the early days. There was even doubt if the books burnt were by any of those banned authors. The libraries naturally were not allowed to lend out any of the banned books though.

Now Ilse you asked me if I could find out anything about your grandmother Steinfeld (Grandmother, mother's side). I asked Peter and he immediately told me that he did a research on some of the people who lived in the Heineman Stiftung and Emmy Steinfeld was one of them. But he did not realise until then that she was Elizabeth Gottschalk's mother. I will send you his letter later (I might even buy a scanner in the meantime and send it Email). Just a short summary of his letter. She lived with her sister-in-law Ida Sternfeld at the retirement home. Your parents joined them in September '41 when it was declared a **Judenhaus**. This meant that it was an assembly area for Jewish families before being sent on somewhere else. They then went to the **Judenhaus** Ohestrass 8, which formerly was a small Jewish primary school (Ilse, did we not have to go there for religious instructions under some awful Hebrew teacher Levy?) and certainly did not have any living accommodation in that building. From there they were sent on to the Jewish Agricultural College in Ahlem near Hanover which also was a **Judenhaus** and both Steinfelds were then transported to Theresienstadt on the 23rd July 1942. I believe it was the same transport in which Grossmama Gottschalk at the age of 93 was sent. Fortunately she Grossmama Gottschalk, died there within a few weeks. Emmy Steinfeld was sent to Treblinka on the 23rd September and Ida on the 26th September. As this was one of the extermination camps they hopefullly did not survive too long. But it is not known the actual date. Both their names are on the **Mahnmals** (Memorial) in Hanover which is next to the Opera House. I took photos to send to you Ilse. By the way please write to Peter sometime. I know what you are like as a letter writer but he would appreciate it and he has put in an enormous amount of work. He is actually not employed by the Archives Department but does all this work voluntary. What he lives on I do not know (Papa would have said "On Food and Drink") but he told me that he draws unemployment benefit but that is the life style he chooses to lead. He still takes school parties around the Jewish cemeteries where the small Prayer Room was also a **Judenhaus** and often talks and lectures about his work and research. Though the present exhibition is not large and not a huge success as it has very little appeal to the general public. He has only two or three interested people each day but it was written up in the local newspapers.

Bremen 18th & 19th November 1999.

I took the train to Bremen (60 minutes) and was met by Elfriede (Bannas). I had no problem seeing her as she had told me that she would carry a bunch of flowers. What a remarkable woman. She lives in a beautiful house with a delightful garden in Bremen. Every wall is covered in shelves full of books. Karl Marx's 'Das Kapital' stands next to Adolf Hitler's 'Mein Kampf'. Extremely interesting person full of knowledge and knows all the local history. I only wished I could have stayed more than one night. Her husband died many years ago and after her retirement as a School Inspector she spent a great deal of time at the University Library. One day searching for one book among the 2.5 million volumes, she has free access to the stacks of shelves, she was suprised that there were so many books with Jewish titles and Hebrew writing in the 1942 section. She got interested and enquired about the books. No one had any recollection of why it was banned in 1942. That was all she needed to get her more interested especially when

she found that all the books not only had the Library Index Numbers but there were the other numbers (Auctioneers) and also all had the **JA** pencilled in them. She did eventually find how they were acquired. Elfriede than thought 'I wonder if any of them have names in the front cover and could I find the previous owners'. She had to search through 1550 books to find 336 books with had names inside the covers. The one of the first names she traced back was in the name of Hinrichsen and the address in Leipzig as well. She wrote to Leipzig and soon discovered that they were the Music Publishers and all the music was published under '**Edition Peters**' name. Apparently every musician in the world knows that name as they also published in London and New York. Irene Lawford-Hinrichsen, granddaughter of the owners of the books, had already been to Leipzig after the re-unification of Germany so the matching up of the books with the name was easy in her case. Loth Irene grandparents died in concentration camps. Irene now lives in London and has written a book about her family which will be published both in England and Germany early next year. (Plug for your book, Irene. Hope you sell many copies).

The other books were not so easy. A name only was no good it had to have some other reference as well. My own and Rudolf's book had Hanover stamped inside but unfortunately there was also a Fritz Gottschalk who emigrated to La Paz, Calle Colon, in Bolivia. Elfriede thought that they were all the same family and could not trace them at all. It took further 5 years for the connection to be made. Elfriede also told me of a most amazing incident. She found the set of four leather bound prayer books, Hebrew and German, and could not find a name inside at all. She accidentally dropped one book and it landed so that the back cover was facing. She thought that she could decipher a embossed letter which at one time had been gilded at the bottom of the cover. By lining up all the four books and only deciphering one or two letters on each one she finally made out the name of **Henny Molling** (Grossmutter). What a story. She has now found 16 families and the books have all been returned to them. I looked at all the books in the Library but I hoped that I could perhaps recognise one or two which could have belonged to my parents but no luck. I really was too young to be interested in books of that sort of thing.

That afternoon at the Universitäts Library was most fascinating. The director Dr. Juergen (Badendreier) showed us all around the miles of stacks. The building has only recently been finished and I am sure you Elizabeth would have been in your element. We came to one section where all the books were in a terrible state and a load had been dumped in bins to be disposed of. Obviously we asked what had happened. Another fascinating story. These books the most important and valuable ones belonged to Staats Library of Bremen. Bremen is an old Hanseatic Town (Cinque Port) going back to the 12th century. During the war the books were sent for safe keeping to disused mines in South East Germany. They survived the war but not the Russian occupation. They took the books to Minsk and other places in the Ukraine and obviously neglected them. They were only returned last year after many years of bargaining. Apparently one of the bargaining factors was that 'We are returning these books to the Jewish families so please let us have our books back'.

We talked about so many other things as well but I am afraid I am not like you, Tom, and make lots of notes all the time. I might remember more later on and I might have got some of my facts slightly wrong. Having to speak German did not help either. I must admit though I did get a little better eventually.

Now comes the social side. We dined that night at the **RATSKELLER** under the town hall in Bremen. Juergen and his partner (female, I can not remember her name) joined us and we had a most delightful evening. It also helped that Juergens partner spoke perfect English. Tom you will

University in Germany. They work in close conjunction with the Rice University in Texas. It will be an English speaking only university. I made them laugh when I said that I would most probably have had a most boring and uneventful life, being the youngest son of a wealthy Jewish merchant. I have to thank Adolf Hitler leading a life full of surprises and memorable events.

Next morning Elfriede arranged for me to look round the Rathaus (Town Hall) which is most magnificent and beautifully restored. It was badly damaged but not destroyed like most of the buildings around. They have all been restored to their former glory. The centre of the town is most picturesque. All the small alleyways and buildings were re-built in the old style. We even went in the most important room in the Rathaus. It was the inner council chamber. It was fantastic as all the furniture, wall coverings (leather embossed), carpets had been restored and regilded. Certainly a memorable morning thanks to Elfriede's efforts. She obviously is very well know and has all the right connections and is well respected. After touring the cities we had a bite to eat and than she took me back to the station to go back to Hanover before catching my flight back to London at 9pm. I had to go and see Peter once more that afternoon as he wanted to give me the letter about your grandmother, Ilse.

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End of History of the books.
